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Growth following adversity: Theoretical perspectives and implications for clinical practice

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Abstract

A number of literatures and philosophies throughout human history have conveyed the idea that there is personal gain to be found in suffering, and it is an idea central to the existential-humanistic tradition of psychology. However, it is only relatively recently that the topic of growth following adversity has become the focus for empirical and theoretical work. In this paper, we review theoretical models of growth, and discuss the implications of growth for clinical practice. Three main theoretical perspectives are reviewed, the functional-descriptive model, the meta-theoretical person-centered perspective, and the biopsychosocial-evolutionary view. It is proposed that these three approaches to theory offer different but complementary levels of analysis, and that theoretical integration between them is possible. We then go on to explore the implications of this theoretical integration for clinical practice, and conclude with a

consideration of the role of therapy in facilitating growth following adversity.



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Keywords

Adversarial growth; Posttraumatic growth; Stress-related growth; Perceived benefits; Thriving

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